

but yif he were overmochel a fool; and for to haten shrewes, it nis no resoun. for right so as languissinge is maladye of body, right so ben vyces & sinne maladye of corage. And so as we ne deme nat, that they that ben syke of hir body ben worthy to ben hated, but rather worthy of pitee: wel more worthy, nat to ben hated, but for to ben had in pitee, ben they of whiche the thoughtes ben constrained by felonous wikkednesse, that is more cruel than any languissinge of body.

Metre IV.

Quid tantos iuvat excitare motus.

AHT delyteth you to excyten so gret moevinges of hate- redes, & to hasten and bisiten the fatal disposicioun of your death with your propre handes? that is to seyn, by batailes or by contek. For yif ye axen the deeth, it hasteth him of his owne wil; ne deeth ne tarieth nat his swifte hors. And the men that the serpent and the lyoun and the tygre and the bere and the boor seken to sleen with hir teeth, yit thilke same men seken to sleen everich of hem other with swerd. Lo! for hir maneres ben dyverse and descordaunt, they moeven unrightful ostes and cruel batailes, & wilnen to perisshe by entrechaunginge of dartes. But the resoun of crueltee nis nat ynough rightful.

ALLOW thanne yelden a coven- able guerdoun to the desertes of men? Love rightfully goode folk, and have pitee on shrewes.

Prose V.

Hic ego video inquam.

AHT see I wel, quod I, either what blisfulnesse or elles what unselinessse is establisshed in the desertes of goode men and of shrewes. But in this ilke fortune of poeple I see somewhat of good & somewhat of yvel. for no wyse man hath lever ben exyled, poore and nedy, and nameles, than for to dwellen in his citee and flouren of riches, and be redoutable by honour, and strong of power. for in this wyse more cleerly and more witnessfully is the office of wyse men ytreted, whan the blisfulnesse and the poustee of governours is, as it were, yshad amonges poeples that be neigheours & subgits; sin that, namely, prisoun, lawe, & thise othre torments of laweful peynes ben rather owed to fe-

lonous citezeins, for the whiche felonous citezeins tho peynes ben establisshed, than for good folk. Channe I mervaile me gretly, quod I, why that the thinges ben so mis entrechaunged, that torments of felonyes pressen and confounden goode folk, & shrewes ravisschen medes of vertu, and ben in honours & in gret estats. And I desyre eek for to witen of thee, what semeth thee to ben the resoun of this dre wel the lasse, yif I trowede that thise thinges weren medled by fortounous astonyinge God, governour of thinges, that, so as God yeveth ofte tymes to goode men goddes and mirthes, and to shrewes yveles and aspre thinges; and yeveth ayeinward to gode folk hardnesse, and to shrewes he graunteth hem hir wil and that they desyren: what difference thanne may ther be bitwixen that that God doth, and the happe of fortune, yif men ne knowe nat the cause why that it is?

AHT it nis no mervaile, quod she, though that men wenen that ther be somewhat foliish and confuse, whan the resoun of the ordre is unknowe. But although that thou ne knowe nat the cause of so gret a disposicioun, natheles, for as moche as God, the gode governour, attempreth & governeth the world, ne doute thee nat that alle thinges ben don aright.

Metre V.

Si quis Arcturi sidera nescit.

AHTOSO that ne knowenat the sterres of Arcture, ytorment neigh to the sovereign countree or point, that is to seyn, ytorment neigh to the sovereign pool of the firmament, & wot nat why the sterre Bootes passeth or gadereth his weynes, and drencheth his late flambe in the see, & why that Bootes the sterre unfoldeth his over-swifte arpynges, thanne shal he wondren of the lawe of the heye eyr.

AND eek, yif that he ne knowe nat why that the hornes of the fulle mone wexen pale & infect by the boundes of the derkenight; and how the mone, deth and confuse, discovereth the sterres that she hadde ycovered by hir clere visage. The comune errour moeveth folk, and maketh wery hir basins of bras by thilke strokes: that is to seyn, that ther is a maner of poeple that highte Coribantes, that wenen that, whan the mone is in the eclipse, that it be enchaunted; and therefore, for to recowe the mone, they beten hir basins with thikke strokes.

AHT no man ne wondreth whan the blastes of the wind Chorus beten the strondes of the see by quakinge; ne no man ne wondreth whan the weightes of the snowe, yharded by the colde, is resolved by the brenninge hete of Phebus the sonne; for heer seen men redely the causes.

BUT the causes yhid, that is to seyn, in hevne, troublen the brestes of men; themoevable poeple is astoned of alle thinges that comen selde & sodeinly in our age. But yif the troublous errour of our ignorance departede fro us, so that we wisten the causes why that swiche thinges biyden, certes, they sholden cese to seme wondres.

Prose VI.

Ita est, inquam.

AHT is it, quod I. But so as thou hast yeven or bihight me to unwrappen the hid causes of thinges, & to discovere me the resouns covered with derknesses, I prey thee that thou devyse and jage me of this matere, and that thou dome to understonden it; for this miracle or this wonder troubleth me right gretly.

AHT thanneshe, a litel what smylinge, seyde: Thou clepest me, quod she, to telle thing that is grettest of alle thinges that mowen ben axed, and to the whiche questioun unnethes is ther aught ynough to laven it; as who seyth, unnethes is ther suffisauntly anything to answeren paritly to thy questioun. for the matere of it is swich, that whan o doute is determined & cut away, ther wexen other doutes withoute number; right as the hevedes wexen of Ydre, the serpent that Ercules slowh. Ne ther ne were no manere ne non ende, but yif that a wight constrainede tho doutes by a right lyly and quik fyr of thought; that is to seyn, by vigour and strengthe of wit. for in this manere men weren wont to maken questions of the simplicitee of the purviaunce of God, and of the ordre of destinee, & of sodein happe, and of the knowinge and predestinacioun of the divyne, and of the libertee of free wille; the whiche thinges thou thyself aperceyvest wel, of what weight they ben. But for as moche as the knowinge of thise thinges is a maner porcioun of the medicine of thee, albeit so that I have litel tyme to don it, yit natheles I wol enforcen me to shewe somewhat of it. But although the norisschinges of dillee of musike delyteth thee, thou

most suffren and forberen a litel of thilke delyte, whyle that I weve to thee resouns yknit by ordre.

AHT sit lyketh to thee, quod I, so do. Thou spak she right as by another bigynninge, and seyde thus. The engendringe of alle thinges, quod she, and alle the progressiouns of muable nature, and al that moeveth in any manere, taketh his causes, his ordre, and his formes, of the stableness of the divyne thought; & thilke divyne thought, that is yset and put in the tour, that is to seyn, in the heichte, of the simplicitee of God, stablissheth many maner gyses to thinges that ben to done; the whiche maner, whan that men loken it in thilke pure clennessse of the divyne intelligence, it is ycleped purviaunce; but whan thilke maner is referred by men to thinges that it moveth & disponeth, thanne of olde men it was cleped destinee. The whiche thinges, yif that any wight loketh wel in his thought the strengthe of that oon & of that other, he shal lightly mowen seen, that thise two thinges ben dyverse. for purviaunce is thilke divyne reson that is establisshed in the sovereign prince of thinges; the whiche purviaunce disponeth alle thinges. But destinee is the disposicioun and ordinaunce clyvinge to moevable thinges, by the whiche disposicioun the purviaunce knitteth alle thinges in hir ordres; for purviaunce embraceth alle thinges tohepe, although that they ben dyverse, & although they ben infinite; but destinee departeth & ordeineth alle thinges singularly, and divyded in moevinges, in places, in formes, in tymes, as thus: lat the unfoldinge of temporel ordinaunce, assembled and ooned in the lokinge of the divyne thought, be cleped purviaunce; and thilke same assemblinge and ooninge, divyded and unfolden by tymes, lat that ben called destinee. And albeit so that thise thinges ben dyverse, yit natheles hangeth that oon on that other; for why the order destinal procedeth of the simplicitee of purviaunce. for right as a werkman, that aperceyvet in his thought the forme of the thing that he wol make, and moeveth the effect of the werk, and ledeth that he hadde looked bifrom in his thoght simply & presently, by temporel ordinaunce: certes, right so God disponeth in his purviaunce, singularly and stably, the thinges that ben to done, but he aministret in many maneres and in dyverse tymes, by destinee, thilke same thinges that he hath disponed.

AHT ANNE, whether that destinee be exercysed outhur by some divyne spirits, servaunts to the divyne purviaunce, or elles by som sowl, or elles by alle nature servinge to God, or elles by